**Sharing in Christ**

Series: Philippians

Date: 5 October 2025, 16th Sunday after Trinity

Location: St George’s Battery Point

Texts: Proverbs 30.7-9; Philippians 4.10-20; Luke 21.1-4

This is our last look at the apostle Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi. and Today we’re talking about another very practical and concrete part of what it is be a disciple of Jesus, a follower of Jesus. Today we’re talking about money. I’m a bit of a Monty Python fan and they’ve got this great song about Money. It goes something like this:

There’s nothing quite so wonderful as money

There is nothing like a newly minted pound

Everyone must hanker for the butchness of a banker

It’s accountancy that makes the world go round

Ok, so that was just to break the ice to talk about what can be a delicate subject for a sermon. We don’t talk about it every week, but it’s here in this passage so we’re going to today.

Through this letter we’ve seen the radical difference that Christ makes in a person’s life as they die to themselves and live for him. So many ways that the gospel of Christ is counter-cultural. These are often culturally dependent. In the ancient world the Romans prized glory, and Jesus’ followers preached that their king had triumphed in the shame of the cross. Greeks looked for wisdom and Jews looked for strength, but Paul says we preach Christ crucified, to the eyes of the world, weakness and folly, but in reality the wisdom and power of God.

One way that the Gospel seems to me to be different no matter what culture you’re from is how it reframes how we see and use money. Our text today has 2 examples of this: Paul and the Philippians. We’ll look at 2 points - Contentment (10-12) and Generosity (13-19). The context for these verses is that Paul thanks the Philippians for their generous financial provision of his needs. This was a concrete expression of their *partnership* in the gospel with Paul.

**1. Contentment 10-12**

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. **11** I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. **12** I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. **13** I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Here in Australia we live in one of the most wealthy and prosperous societies in the world, and certain we are more materially blessed than any people before us. Yet the whole advertising industry is based around telling us that we ought not to be content till we have more things, more experiences, holidays, a certain lifestyle and, and, and. They say we see between 4000 and 10,000 ads a day. That’s a lot of reinforcement that buying stuff will make us happy! But it’s never enough. Actually, the most powerful ads are ones that tap into the longings of our soul. And there’s an irony because we know that money and possessions cannot fill our soul!

But there’s another road that offers the secret of contentment. It’s a more spiritual path in comparison to crass materialism. This comes from Buddhism and the ancient Stoic philosophers. They recognise that if you look for satisfaction in the external goods of this world you’ll only ever be disappointed, because material goods are fleeting.

So instead of trying to change the world, you change your attitude to the world. This is the path of poverty and self-renunciation. Find contentment by becoming detached from your desires, the people and things around you that you might love. The 2nd century Stoic philosopher Epictetus wrote: “What harm is there while you are kissing your child to murmur softly, ‘Tomorrow you will die’?”

But we have an intuition that we need love in life and that we find the most satisfaction in relationships. The Buddhist and Stoic approach in the end only hardens your heart and dehumanises you.

In Philippians, St Paul offers a different way to contentment of neither poverty nor riches. He knows both, but he says - “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.” What is it?

Verse 13: “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

The secret of contentment lies in your contentment being utterly independent of circumstances. But it is not being impervious to circumstances by a fantastic effort of your will. It is not being a self-sufficient person. No it is casting yourself on God, and finding contentment in him. People often take verse 13 out of context. It doesn’t mean that you can simply do anything because God gives you strength. What Paul is talking about is this: that whatever the situation that God placed him in, he had learnt to find the strength he needed in God. Christ was all Paul needed and so he was content in every situation.

How can Paul do this? For 2 reasons.

First - Our souls are made for God. The 5th century African theologian St. Augustine put it like this:
“You have made us for yourself O God, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.”[[1]](#footnote-0)

Following Paul in Romans 1, Augustine says our problem as human beings is not so much that we love the wrong things, but rather we love them in the wrong way. We can only love them in the right way when we love God more than everything and everyone else. Fail to do that and we hurt ourselves. In Augustine’s terms, the secret of contentment is not to love the things of this world less, it is rather to love God more.

Jesus says he is the bread of heaven. He will nourish our souls as we feed on him.

Or in the Psalmist’s words - *Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart*.[[2]](#footnote-1) So the more we find our delight in God - the more we will find contentment.

Second, as we rest in him, so he gives us the strength, by his Spirit, to face any circumstance. This is the same Spirit by whose mighty strength Jesus was raised from the dead.

The question for each of us is: where does your contentment lie? If you’re not content, what are you looking to for contentment when you’ll only find it in Christ? What do these things promise? How do they fail to deliver? And then, where do you see in Scripture how Jesus meets these desires? Meditate on who Christ is and how he satisfies these longings of your soul.

**2. Generosity - the example of the Philippians 13-19**

**14** Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. **15** Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; **16** for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. **17** Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. **18** I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. **19** And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

There’s a few things that we can note about this text.

1. **Partnership in the Gospel.**

Paul frames the financial gift that the Philippians have sent as an expression of their partnership with him in the Gospel. They share in his troubles. Back in chapter 1 we saw they share in the grace of Christ with him. As recipients of God’s gift of life, they now give so that others might receive. They are partners with Paul in his work through their generous financial giving.

As a church we partner with the Durdins in working with Wyclif Bible Translators in Germany. Marc leads the Keyman project, software that converts keyboards on computers and phones from one language script to another. Joey oversees Wyclif Aid projects in SE Asia. We also partner with Andy Maskell working with the University Fellowship of Christians to share Christ and disciple students at UTas. They are our hands and feet, as it were, sent out from St George’s to shine the light of Christ. And we support them in our prayers and as a church we give each $10,000 per annum to help fund their work. We also pray for Clara working on a Mercy Ship in Sierra Leone, and we support the work of Anglicare Tasmania through the year. They are our partners in the Gospel.

If you’re a regular here at St George’s then I want to encourage you to partner financially with us in our mission here in Hobart to be the Light on the Hill. I want to thank many of you for your financial partnership in the ministry here. We can’t do the ministry God has called us to without your partnership, and part of what you give goes to supporting Andy and the Durdins.

2. **The Philippians’ story**

Paul rehearses this in verse 15, but listen to how he puts it in 2 Corinthians 8

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. [That’s the Philippians] **2** In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. **3** For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, **4** they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. **5** And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

What a remarkable story. You could put it like this: Persecution + Poverty = Abundant Generosity

The Philippians lived out the example of the widow in Luke 21 who out of her poverty gave all she had.

I wonder what the equation would look like for St George’s?

Safety + Affluence = What?

David is the church treasurer. Imagine if he came to me saying that some of you had urgently pleaded with him that you might have the privilege of sharing in the service of giving to the saints!

Some of you give very generously and sacrificially. I’m also tremendously encouraged to see how some of you have grown in this area, and how some of you have started giving for the first time this year. I want to honour your giving. Did you see how Paul describes this in verse 18? Your giving is “a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.” It is something that is “credited to your account”, verse 17. Jesus himself says that as you give sacrificially you store up treasure in heaven.[[3]](#footnote-2)

And did you notice that promise in verse 19?

*And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*

See this is the reason that the Philippians could be so generous in their poverty. They understood that God had lavished upon them his superabundant generosity: in sending Jesus to die for them, while they were still sinners. This is the most outrageous free gift. And so they gave in return. But they also trusted that God would also supply all their needs. All the resources of heaven and earth are his and he cares for his people.

We’ve seen God provide for us as St George’s. Back in December 2018 we signed a contract for $2.2 million of stone restoration. We only had $600,000 set aside for this. To cover the rest we would have spent all our capital and then some. It was a step of faith signing that contact. But then just before Christmas our local MP called me to say that he had just secured $1.6 million in federal government funding. It was an amazing Christmas present.

God has been generous to us in sending Christ. He has promised to supply all our needs. What this means is that giving is a gauge of spiritual health. If you’re able to give generously and cheerfully to Christian ministry and to provide for those in need, chances are you’ve grasped just how generous God is towards you. But second, giving shows that you take God at his word that he will provide. You’re not looking to your super, or your bank balance for your future. Giving then is a spiritual discipline.

Let’s get really concrete for a moment. Last year we increased our giving by $19,000. I praise God for your generosity. At our AGM in August we set an ambitious collections target of $200,000 for this financial year. Even with this we’re still budgeting a $60,000 loss that we will have to draw down on our capital to cover. We have about 60 giving units currently at church (singles, couples or families). $200,000 across 60 units translates to an average of each unit giving $3,333 a year, or $64 per week. That’s an average. Some of you will give less. Some of you will give more, much more. Some currently don’t give. We give according to our means, and God calls us to be generous.

In our “your part in the budget” flyer, we’ve tried to put together what this might look like on a sliding scale depending on your income.

The average household income in Hobart according to the 2021 census was $1850 per week or $96,000 per annum. Let’s round that up to $100,000. A rule of thumb from the Old Testament is to give 10%. That would be $192 per week. Giving 5% would be $96, 2% would be $38.

Today is a moment for you to consider your giving to God’s work here at St George’s. For those who already give, it’s a moment to review. Ask yourself, “What am I giving now? Is that what God is calling me to give?”

And I especially want to speak to those of you who have recently joined St George’s, or who don’t give. God is calling you to share in the work of the Good News of Jesus here, in this place, in this very practical way. Will you answer his call? Have a look at your income. Pray about it. Commit to giving a percentage. Make a plan to do that.

You can give by credit card on the tap’n’go, or cash or cheque in the collection box. But the easiest way to give consistently is to set up a regular bank transfer. Our bank details are on the “Your part in the budget” flier and on our website.

God promises he will supply all our needs. He has lavished his generosity on us in Christ. How can you who have received so much, undeserved from his hand, be generous in return and partner in the work of the gospel with your finances? Let each of us pray for contentment each day as we pray, “give us today our daily bread.”

1. *Confessions* 1.1 [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Psalm 37.4 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Luke 12.33-34, cf. Matthew 6.19-20 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)